



Health Risks Among Rhode Island Public High School Students 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey May 2008



The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is an anonymous and voluntary survey among random samples of high school students in over 60 states and municipalities. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention developed the YRBS to monitor risk behaviors related to the major causes of mortality, disease, injury, and social problems among youth and adults in the United States. In the spring of 1997, 2001, 2003, 2005, and 2007, between 1,392 and 2,362 Rhode Island adolescents participated in the YRBS with response rates ranging from 60% to 71% (66% in 2007). These weighted, self-reported findings are representative of 9th to 12th grade public high school students statewide and can be used to make important inferences concerning health-risk behaviors. The RI Departments of Health; Education; Mental Health, Retardation, and Hospitals; and the Office of Health and Human Services provided funding for the YRBS.

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SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

There were statistically significant trends for 30 out of 40 indicators selected for this report. Twenty-two improved (helmet use; alcohol use and driving; seatbelt use; alcohol use and riding; physical fighting; weapon carrying; drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes, and smoking marijuana in the past month; lifetime marijuana, inhalant, and ecstasy use; condom use; physical inactivity; TV watching; and fighting, weapon carrying, feeling unsafe, illegal drugs, and the use of cigarettes, marijuana, and alcohol on school property). Only 7 worsened (dating violence, forced sexual intercourse, eating 5+ fruits/vegetables and drinking 3+ glasses of milk per day, physical education (PE) enrollment, lifetime asthma, and AIDS/HIV education). One significant trend (trying to lose weight) could not be classified as improving or worsening, and 10 measures showed stable trends.

Injury and Violence

The proportion of students rarely or never wearing a helmet when riding a bicycle declined significantly from 91% in 1997 to 80% in 2007. There were also significant declines for riding with a driver who had been drinking (36% to 28%), driving when drinking (14% to 10%), and especially for rarely or never wearing seatbelts (33% to 14%). Physical fighting continued a significant declining trend in 2007 (26%), but being physically hurt by a girlfriend or boyfriend (14%) and forced sexual intercourse (10%) increased significantly in 2007 after remaining steady since 2001. Rates for sad feelings and attempted suicide remained steady at 24% and 9%, respectively, in 2007, and not going to school owing to unsafe feelings declined significantly to 4%.

Current (in past month) Tobacco, Alcohol, and Marijuana Use; Lifetime (ever) Other Drug Use

Current cigarette use overall (15%) and on school property (7%) seemed to level off between 2005 and 2007 after a significant decline from 1997. Current use of any tobacco product was 22% in 2007, increasing from 9th to 12th graders (18% vs. 28%). Current alcohol use was unchanged in 2007 at 43% after a significant decline from 52% in 1997. Current marijuana use declined significantly from 1997 to 2007 (29% to 23%), as did lifetime ecstasy use from 2003 to 2007 (9% to 7%). Lifetime inhalant use has remained at about 10% since 2003, half the 1997 rate. Lifetime cocaine use varied up and down between 6% and 10% from 1997 to 2007. In 2007, the proportion ever taking painkillers without a prescription ranged from 15% among 9th and 10th graders to 22% among 12th graders.

Sexual Behaviors

In 2007, nearly half of all students had ever had sex and a third had had recent sex (past 3 months), consistent with previous years. Among sexually active students, use of condoms was unchanged from 2005 to 2007 at 66%, a significant increase from 52% in 1997. In 2007, 6% of students reported having sex before age 13, ranging from 9% among 9th graders to 3% among 12th graders.

Weight Management and Dietary Behaviors

The proportion of students who were overweight increased slightly each year from 14% in 2001 to 16% in 2007. There was also a significant increase between 2001 and 2005 in the proportion of students who were obese. This upward trend in obesity did not continue in 2007, as the rate appeared to decline slightly to 11% from 13% in 2005. The proportion of students who described themselves as overweight in 2007 declined to 29% (the same as in 1997), while those trying to lose weight increased significantly from 43% to 48% between 1997 and 2007. From 2001 to 2007 the proportion who ate 5+ servings of fruits or vegetables per day declined significantly (27% to 19%), as did the proportion who drank 3+ glasses of milk (23% to 16%).

Physical Activity

Although the proportion of students not enrolled in PE increased from 13% to 21% between 2005 and 2007, overall physical inactivity decreased significantly from 68% to 58%. Watching 3+ hours of TV daily decreased significantly from 2001 to 2007 (34% to 27%). Over a quarter of students played video or computer games 3+ hours in 2007, the rate declining from 9th to 12th graders (35% to 20%).

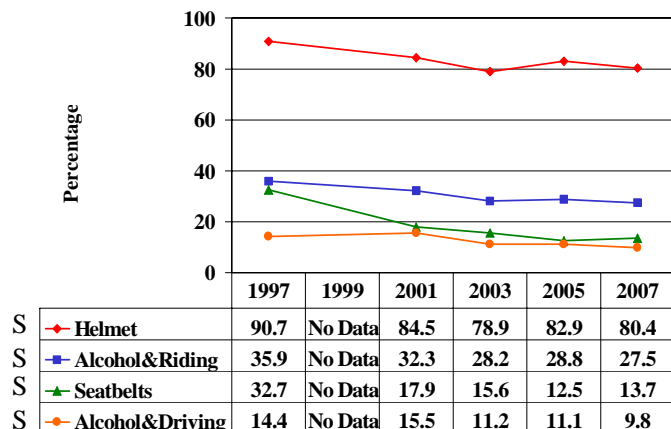
Other Health Issues

Despite a 2% decrease between 2005 and 2007 in the proportion of students that never had HIV/AIDS education, there was a significant increasing trend overall between 1997 (5%) and 2007 (11%). Lifetime (ever diagnosed) asthma increased significantly from 20% in 2005 to 26% in 2007, and 11% of students reported physical disabilities or long-term health problems in 2007.

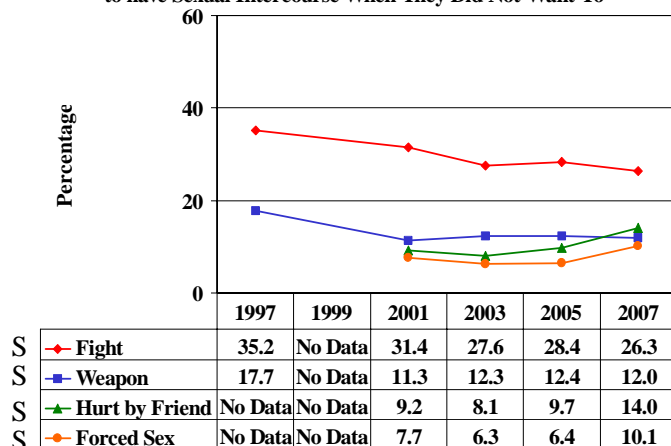
**Figure 1 – Health Risks Among Rhode Island Public High School Students, Grades 9-12,
YRBS (1997, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007)**

Injury and Violence:

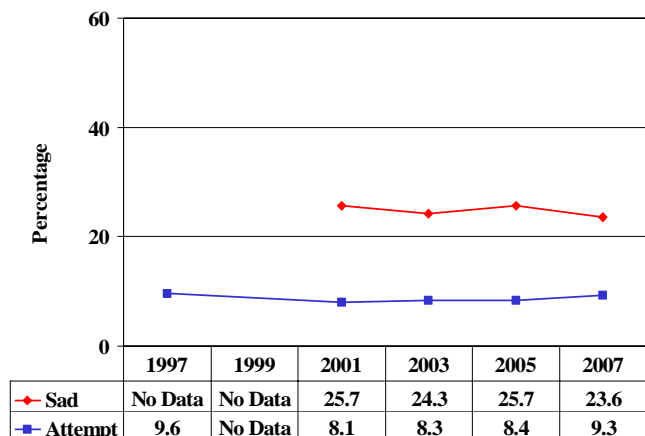
Percentage of Students Who Rarely or Never Wore a Helmet among those who Rode a Bicycle in the Past 12 Months; Rode in a Vehicle Driven by Someone Who Had Been Drinking Alcohol in the Past Month; Rarely or Never Wore a Seat Belt When Riding in a Car; Drove a Car After Drinking in the Past Month



Percentage of Students Who Were in a Physical Fight in the Past Year; Carried a Weapon in the Past Month; Were Hit, Slapped, or Physically Hurt by a Boyfriend or Girlfriend in the Past Year; Were Ever Physically Forced to have Sexual Intercourse When They Did Not Want To

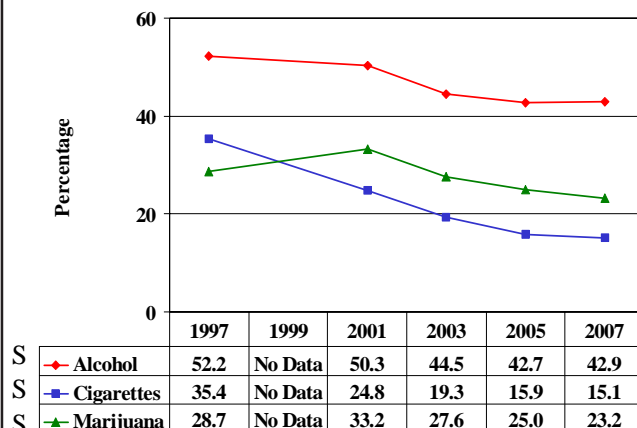


Percentage of Students Who Felt So Sad or Hopeless Almost Every Day for Two Weeks or More in a Row That They Stopped Doing Some Usual Activities in the Past Year; Actually Attempted Suicide in the Past Year



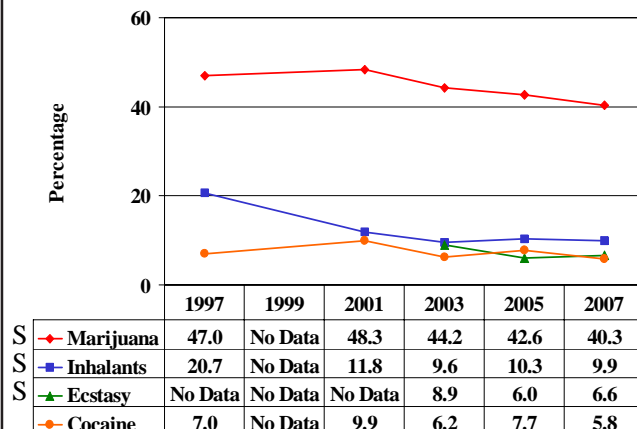
Current Tobacco, Alcohol, and Marijuana Use:

Percentage of Students Who Drank Alcohol; Smoked Cigarettes; Used Marijuana - in the Past Month



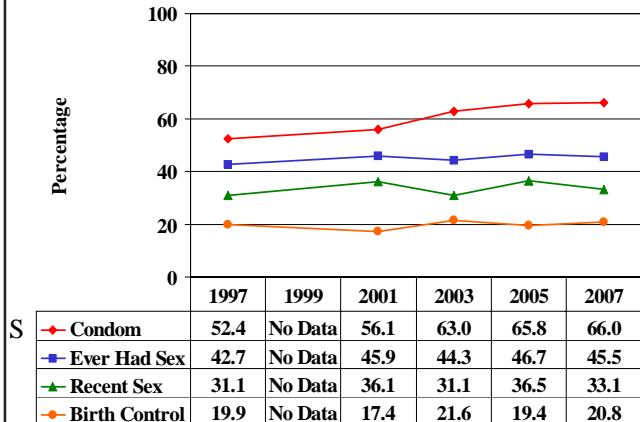
Lifetime Other Drug Use:

Percentage of Students Who Have Ever Used Marijuana; Ever Used Inhalants to Get High; Ever Used Ecstasy; Ever Used Cocaine



Sexual Behaviors:

Percentage of Students Who Had Sex in Past 3 Months and Used Condom the Last Time; Ever Had Sex; Had Sex in the Past 3 Months; Had Sex in the past 3 Months and Used Birth Control Pills to Prevent Pregnancy



Note: An "S" next to the line graph legend box denotes a statistically significant linear change.

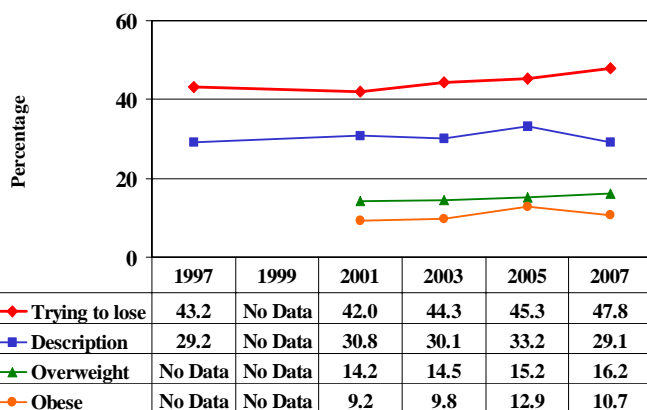
Source: 1997 Rhode Island YRBS (n=1,528) 2003 Rhode Island YRBS (n=1,814) 2007 Rhode Island YRBS (n=2,210)

2001 Rhode Island YRBS (n=1,392) 2005 Rhode Island YRBS (n=2,362)

Figure 1 (Continued) – Health Risks Among Rhode Island Public High School Students, Grades 9-12, YRBS (1997, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007)

Weight Management and Dietary Behaviors:

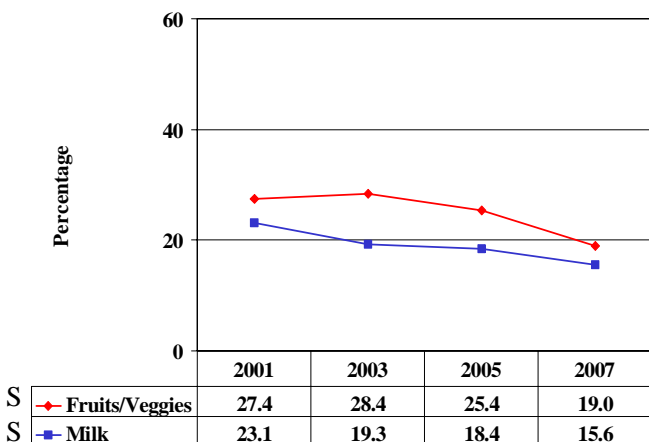
Percentage of Students Who Were Trying to Lose Weight; Described Themselves As Overweight; Are Overweight*; Are Obese**



* At or above the 85th percentile but below the 95th percentile for body mass index by age and sex based on reference data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey I.

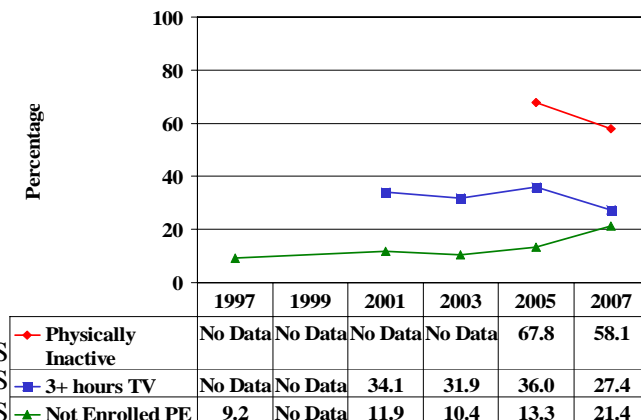
** At or above the 95th percentile for body mass index by age and sex based on reference data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey I.

Percentage of Students Who Ate Five or More Servings of Fruits and Vegetables Per Day; Drank Three or More Glasses of Milk Per Day – in the Past Week



Physical Activity:

Percentage of Students Who Were Not Physically Active for at Least One Hour on 5+ Days in the Past Week; Watched 3+ Hours of TV on an Average School Day; Did Not Attend PE classes on One or More Days in an Average Week When They Were in School



Other Health Issues:

Percentage of Students Who Had Never Been Taught About AIDS or HIV Infection in School; Had Ever Been Told By a Doctor or Nurse They Have Asthma

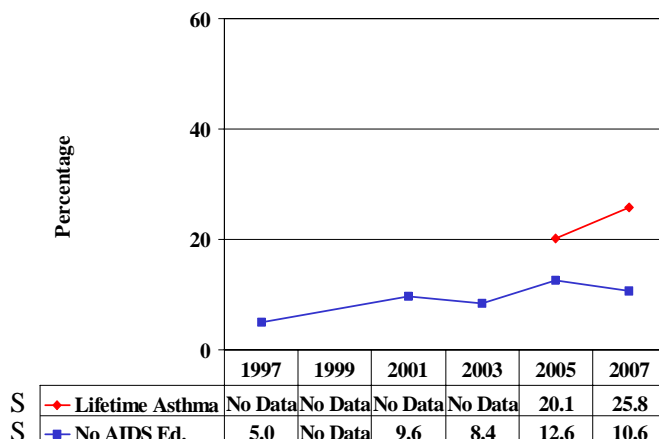
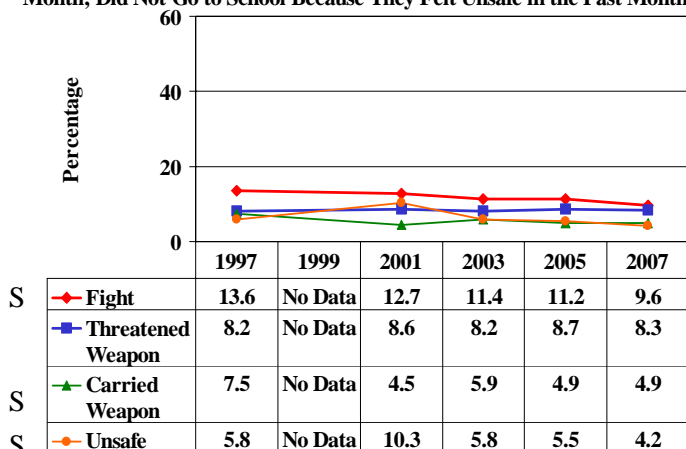
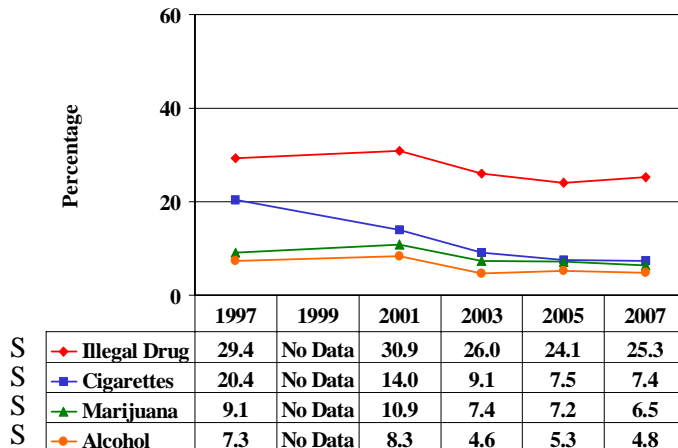


Figure 2 – Health Risks Among Rhode Island Public High School Students Occurring on School Property, Grades 9-12, YRBS (1997, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007)

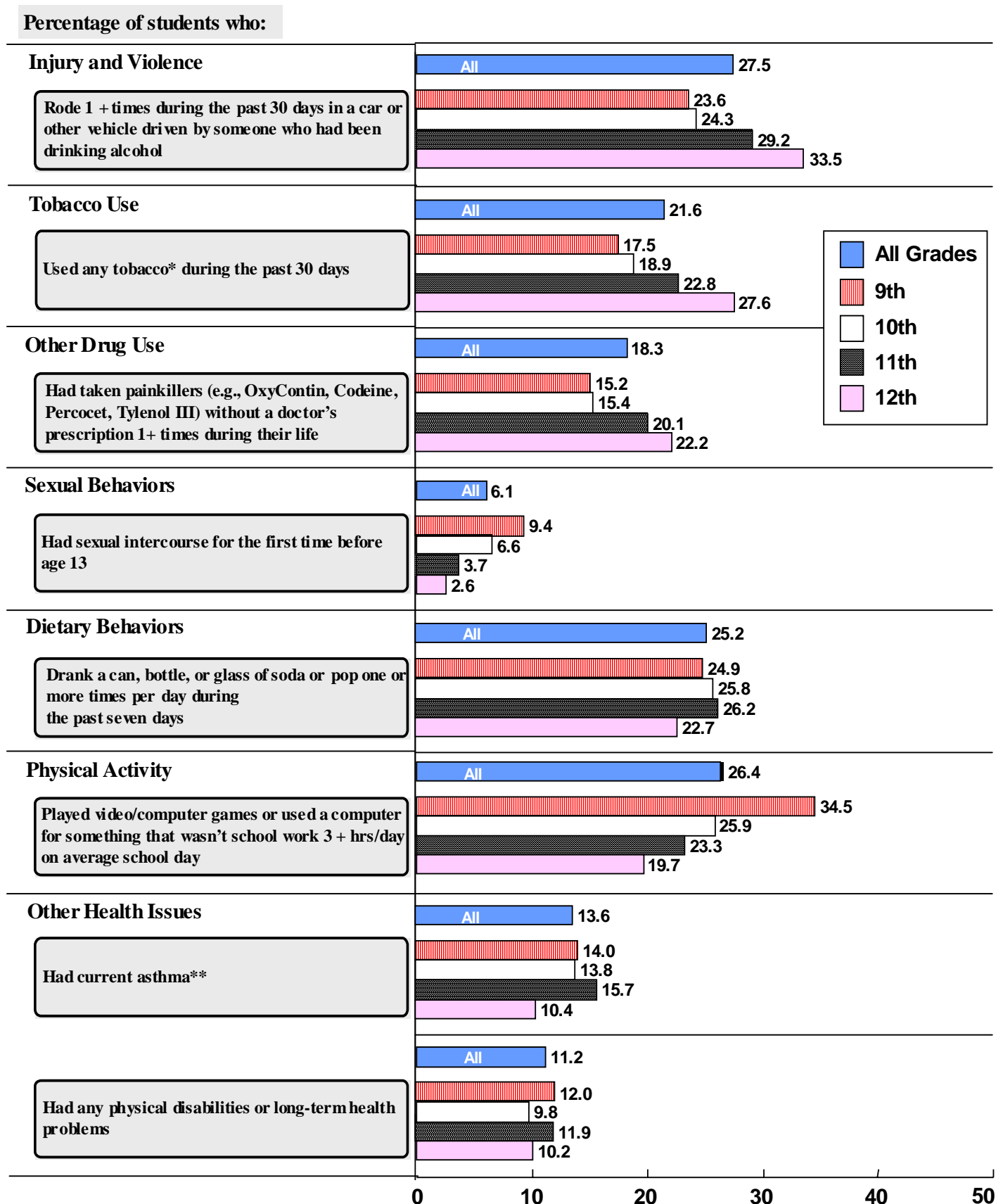
Percentage of Students Who Were in a Physical Fight on School Property in the Past Year; Were Threatened or Injured With a Weapon on School Property in the Past Year; Carried a Weapon on School Property in the Past Month; Did Not Go to School Because They Felt Unsafe in the Past Month



Percentage of Students Who Were Offered, Sold, or Given an Illegal Drug on School Property in the Past Year; Smoked Cigarettes, Used Marijuana, Drank Alcohol on School Property in the Past Month



**Figure 3 – Selected Health Risks Among Rhode Island Public High School Students,
By Grades, 2007 YRBS**



* Includes cigarettes, cigars, chewing tobacco, snuff or dip.

** Includes students who have ever been told by a doctor or nurse that they had asthma and they still have asthma.

Source: 2007 Rhode Island Youth Risk Behavior Survey (n=2,210)